

Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

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TESTIMONY Of

Patricia Spruance, Windham Town Clerk

HB 6693 AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING
SB 713 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISCLOSURE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS
**SJ 29 RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-
EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**
**HJ 1 RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE
ABSENTEE VOTING**
SB 1057 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND EARLY VOTING
SB 1064 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING
HB 5004 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Flexer, Representative Blumenthal, Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco, and all distinguished members of the GAE Committee. My name is Patricia Spruance and I am the Windham Town Clerk and 1st Vice President of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA).

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding these important election bills.

HB 6693 AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING, SJ 713 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISCLOSURE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

The CTCA supports public inspection of absentee ballot applications that have been completed and signed as indicated in both bills. Town Clerks must be able to process incoming applications to ensure that the ballot is mailed to the voter within 24 hours as required under CGS 9-140. We request that applications be available for public inspection at a time that will cause no interruption or delay in processing and mailing ballots ensuring the voter's access to the ballot is priority.

Sec. 2 (A) of HB 6693 requires the registrar of voters to attempt to notify any absentee ballot voter who did not sign the inner envelope on election day. With the current absentee ballot envelope set the missing signature would only be known when the envelopes are opened on election day. The majority of absentee voters (including military, college students, voters owning second homes and voters who work out-of-state) are absent from town on election day. Regardless, if the registrars are able to reach

these voters by phone, they would not be able to correct any defect with their absentee ballot. The unintended consequence would be voters frustrated with the process as their ballot was returned weeks earlier.

While we agree that this issue has caused some ballots to be rejected and should be examined, the CTCA respectfully recommends new absentee ballot envelopes modifying the location where the voter's signature is located so that the envelope does not have to be opened thus allowing the town clerk to see that a voter's signature is missing. This will allow the process of notification to take place on the day the ballot is received by the town clerk. In addition, since the town clerk has the application with the voter's contact information in their office, it makes sense for the town clerk to notify the voter at the time of discovery. This process would afford the voter the greatest time to correct any defect with their absentee ballot.

SJ 29 RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING and HJ 1 RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING

The CTCA supports the Constitutional question to allow Connecticut voters the opportunity to decide the future of absentee voting in our state. No excuse absentee voting, in conjunction with early voting and election day voting will offer our voters the greatest possible access to the ballot. Paramount to the entire voting process is the need to replace our 25-year tabulation technology, implement robust tabulators along with ePoll books and update the Connecticut Voter Registration System (CVRS) to handle all forms of voting. To efficiently process the higher volume of centralized counted ballots (absentee ballots, election day registration ballots and early voting ballots), funding for new tabulators with high speed ballot hoppers, should be provided, especially for those municipalities with large voter populations. Without the high speed tabulators, it may take several days to count ballots, especially for State and Presidential Elections.

SB 1057 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE AND EARLY VOTING, SB 1064 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING, HB 5004 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING

The CTCA is committed to providing voters with secure and convenient opportunities to cast their ballot. Since 2009 the CTCA has supported In-Person Early Voting by tabulator but understand that the current tabulators are unable to accommodate an early voting system. Early Voting as outlined in these bills will be conducted by the registrars of voters and each voter will place their ballot into an envelope and deposit the envelope into a receptacle. The registrars shall transport such receptacle at the conclusion of each day to the town clerk. We respectfully request that an Affidavit of Delivery and Receipt be completed daily. The affidavit will be signed by both the registrar and the town clerk indicating the number of envelopes delivered and received. This will ensure a strict chain of custody verified by two individuals from separate offices.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.